

# Community Asset Mapping

Use this activity to help youth deepen their understanding of how their community informs their identity. Youth will participate in a structured walk to brainstorm assets and needs within their neighborhood. Rather than focus on Ways I Am this activity explores the **Ways We Are** as a community. This activity was contributed by Banyan Community and adapted from a National Youth Leadership Council curriculum.

## Why This Matters

- This activity allows youth to practice awareness of their physical surroundings and the community strengths that they benefit from.

## Getting Started

- Materials: pen and paper for each youth, clipboards for every two youth, route information, map of the neighborhood, large paper for group discussion.
- Time: At least 45 minutes to an hour for the entire activity
- Divide youth into groups of 3-4. There should be an adult for every group.
- A few days before the activity, try out your planned route. Make note of how long it takes to walk the route, safety hazards, and observations of your own take on the assets you observe.

## How To Do It

- 1) As a large group, brainstorm the meaning of "community." Potential discussion questions: "Is your school a community?" "How big does a community need to be?" "What should we consider our community for the purpose of doing some work to help improve it?"
- 2) Agree upon what the group will identify as their community or neighborhood (e.g., school campus, the school campus and five-block radius, X, Y, and Z streets).
- 3) Assign one adult per group, and assign different starting points for each group. Decide on an ending time for the activity and a meeting place. Plan for at least 30 minutes for the walk.
- 4) Walking in groups of three pairs within each group, conduct a tour of the selected area and identify key places, organizations, and institutions in the community.

Questions to consider:

- Where do people congregate?
- What are our most important businesses in the area?
- What recreation facilities, schools, associations, congregations, and other neighborhood institutions exist?
- Consider also social assets such as different cultures, ethnicities, and age groups.

These will be identified as **community assets**: the good things a community has to offer.

- 5) As the groups walk, have participants observe and write what they consider to be needs or problems in the community. Are there safe, productive, and fun places for children to spend time after school? Do they sense tensions among neighbors? What problems or issues do they find in the neighborhood? These will be identified as **community needs**: what the community is lacking.

# Community Asset Mapping

---

- 6) Reconvene all the groups to share what the youth observed, both assets and needs. Use a large piece of paper, blackboard or whiteboard to record participants' observations under the two columns: Assets and Needs.
- 7) Reflect and discuss as a group. Ask the group what the common themes are among the participants' observations. Broaden the discussion by asking the group what items they would add to the lists, i.e. other assets and needs that the youth are aware of but may not have observed directly during their walk.

## Take It Further

- Consider having youth journal individually after the activity. Some potential prompts are:
  - Describe something that you noticed during your observation walk that you hadn't in the past.
  - How did it feel to look at a familiar area through "different eyes" in order to record assets and needs?
  - What would you like your neighborhood to look like in five years? What assets can you imagine it having? How can you help it develop these assets?
- This activity could be used to spark ideas about a potential service learning project.